

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

*Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.*

#### CHAPTER XVI. THE JOURNEY.

"I CANNOT attack him now—here—on this platform—it is morally impossible," thought the Rector, as he walked with Geoffrey Thorne towards the booking-office. "What am I to do? He will take his ticket and be off in half an hour. I, most foolish and futile—shall have done nothing whatever. He—and the revolver! He is an amazing young man, to be so natural with it all. Very quiet, though, and still waters run deep. What am I to say; what am I to do?"

In answer to these questions an idea leaped ready made into the Rector's brain. At first he was startled.

"Is thy servant a dog?" flashed also into his mind. But after all, the idea was innocent and partly true. A sudden plan and a sudden decision were not sins, and need not be confessed to his fellow-man. His bag and his pocket-book were provided for such an emergency. The suggestion which had at first seemed so clever that it must be diabolic began very soon to take rank as an angel's whisper. At the door of the booking-office Mr. Cantillon said to Geoffrey:

"Do I understand that you are on your way to Paris?"

"Yes," said the young man gravely, looking at the floor. "To Paris and to Switzerland. I get a train on to Berne early to-morrow. Can I do anything for you—take your ticket anywhere?"

"To Paris, if you please," said Mr.

Cantillon. "Stop a moment, though. You must go? You are bent on going?"

Geoffrey glanced at him, and flushed up to his hair under the look of those clear, kind eyes.

"Yes," he said, in a low tone. I must go—I must."

"Then we shall travel together," said Mr. Cantillon quietly, taking out his pocket-book.

He was very tired: the day had been an exhausting one, and he rather dreaded the night journey, the disturbance of all his usual and most regular habits. But the task of stopping this young fellow now was evidently beyond his powers. He only now hoped to bring him back from Paris, having gained his full confidence in the meanwhile. What his arguments were to be he hardly knew. Words would be given him, he thought, and if he judged his man rightly they would not be given in vain.

At present, however, he did not feel equal to talking to him any more. He left him—his charge—smoking on the platform, and went to rest a little in the waiting-room, promising to be back in plenty of time for the train. Leaning back in the corner of a sofa, he fell fast asleep. People going in and out did not rouse him. At last, opening his eyes with a start, he thought it was a dark winter's morning in his own room at Bryans. The gas was burning rather dimly, and Geoffrey Thorne was standing by the sofa. He had stood there quite still for a minute or more, watching the Rector's calm face in sleep. No care, no disappointment, no agony of love and grief, could ever, it seemed, have troubled that peaceful countenance. But in another moment, after the first surprise of waking, Mr. Cantillon's eyes and smile

told Geoffrey that if he had never felt these things, he could understand them.

"Another of my temptations," he said, "falling asleep at the wrong moment. As bad as the bookstall. I had a friend in need, luckily, or I might have missed the train."

Geoffrey took his bag silently. As they crossed the platform, passed through the gate and walked down the length of the lighted train, the Rector's hand was on his arm, and the young man was wondering with awakened faculties, though he asked no questions, what was taking this dear old fellow to Paris to-night. Could he, too, be going on to Switzerland—perhaps for some reason connected with that news, to which neither of them had yet ventured an allusion in talk? Geoffrey remembered hearing that Mr. Cantillon was one of the trustees. Perhaps his consent was needed, and he would not give it without seeing Captain Nugent. Anyhow, it seemed a rather queer, sudden journey. Geoffrey never for an instant thought of his own proceedings as being responsible for Mr. Cantillon's.

He did not long trouble himself with these unprofitable questionings. He chose a comfortable corner for the Rector, and established himself next to him, but did not take his place till the train started. The Rector watched him standing in the half-light at the door, and once again admired his face, the shape of his head, the broad shoulders and strong, lithe figure.

"A better specimen of human nature, I suspect," he was thinking, when his companion joined him, and the train was off almost immediately.

They were not alone in their compartment, rather to the Rector's disappointment, for two other men had got in. They soon went to sleep, and to tell the truth, he was not very long in following their example. Geoffrey alone remained awake, and sat gazing into vacancy, while the train rocked, and bustled, and thundered on its way to Dover.

When they arrived there, he took his companion under his care quite naturally, guided him on board—for Mr. Cantillon's eyes failed him a good deal in the dark, and all the moving lights dazzled and perplexed him—led him below and settled him on a sofa in the saloon. It was a calm night, but cold and autumnal.

"Thank you, thank you, my friend," said the Rector. "If I were a young

fellow, I would stay on deck and walk up and down with you. But I'm growing old and useless."

"Are you tired?" said Geoffrey. "I rather wonder at your travelling at night, do you know?"

"No, not tired now. Why, I have been asleep for hours. Look here; suppose we try to get a carriage to ourselves on the other side."

"I'll see what I can do," said Geoffrey.

During the next hour, as he smoked on deck and stared across the dark flashing sea, the strange feeling came over him that all this was a dream; that he should wake and find himself in the old studio at Herzheim—that she would be standing in the window as she stood that day, when her presence filled his whole soul with something he had never known before. Since then, hope had lifted him to the sky, only to dash him on the earth, helpless and wounded, but yet unable to resign himself or know that he was beaten. It was the old story.

His plans now were vague; they could be nothing else. Only one thing seemed certain—that he should and would see her again, and hear the truth, his fate, from her own lips. Evidently she had not known, she had not understood, that she held a man's life in her hands; for, now that he had lost her, Geoffrey was very sure that he could not live without her. His whole heart and soul, that night, were full of one thought, one desolation. Still, in the midst of it all, there came with a sort of tender sweetness the remembrance of "his parson," his new friend, asleep below. Without his presence there, which brought a feeling of responsibility, Geoffrey might have felt that the shortest way out of his trouble would be to drop quietly overboard into this smoothly heaving sea. Whether he would have taken this shortest way is another question. If he had borrowed a revolver for his travelling companion on such a peaceful journey, it looked at least possible.

As it was, he made no attempt at any such unauthorised escape, feeling in reality, and without irritation, that he was bound in a way on parole. When the lights of Calais were in sight, he went below to fetch his friend, and found him once more quietly sleeping. He helped him upstairs and through the confusion of landing, took him to the train, and was fortunate in securing an empty compartment, making friends with one of the officials to keep

it so. He then quietly suggested to the Rector that he had better have some coffee. This restored all Mr. Cantillon's wits, which were a little confused by fatigue, and they found themselves starting together on their midnight journey through the plains of France, both wakeful, and Mr. Cantillon, at least, very much inclined to talk.

He began on some ordinary subject, and Geoffrey suddenly found himself thinking with surprise of the fact that, much as they had talked already, not one word had been said by the Rector of that great news which must all the while be in his mind. At first this thought brought nothing but thankfulness. Where could he have looked, what could he have said, if the Rector had, however innocently, begun upon the subject? And yet, by some strange contradiction, Geoffrey was now conscious that he would not be altogether sorry if the ice could be broken, or rather, perhaps, the crust of the volcano. He had never in his life met any one to whom his heart went out as it did to Mr. Cantillon. In his feeling for him there was mingled a great deal of admiration and tenderness, a little pity, a strong trust and confidence. He had always been a rather solitary man; his life had been full of struggles known only to himself. In his way he was proud and also sensitive; his equals in birth were not his equals in mind or nature, and he never went far afield to look for friends on other levels than his own. It would have been better for Geoffrey if his father had sent him to college, instead of finding for him that bank employment which soon became unbearable.

Now, as he sat in that Paris train, in the small hours of the morning, his eyes fixed attentively on his companion, his ears open to his talk, his mind constantly going astray and playing these other senses false, there began to come over him incomprehensible feelings, longings that astonished him, words forcing themselves to his lips. To his great surprise, he found himself wishing with all his heart that Mr. Cantillon knew everything. And now the pleasant voice asked him, as if it was a quite ordinary matter, what time he thought of going on from Paris.

"Twenty minutes to nine," Geoffrey said, and he fancied in the dim light that his friend's face fell a little. "It was a queer coincidence," he remarked after a

moment, "that you should have been going to Paris to-night. I'm glad it happened so."

"Thank you," said the Rector gently. "I should hardly have got on so well without your kindly help."

There was silence for a minute, and then he said—and it was not the lamp's deceiving glimmer which made Geoffrey see a pink colour suddenly rise in his face:

"I have a little thing to do in Paris. Long ago my eyes troubled me a good deal, and I went to an excellent oculist there. He sent me to an optician in the Rue de Rivoli, from whom I have had glasses ever since. The last were not quite satisfactory; I'm afraid, you know, it means a little new failure of sight. One can't explain those things so well by letter. I think I may as well see the oculist if possible, and then pay another visit to my optician, and get the whole thing put into working order."

"Have you made an appointment with the oculist?"

"No," said Mr. Cantillon, the flush in his face becoming deeper. "No, I have not. But I think probably he will be able to see me. Paris is not very full at this time."

He fidgeted a little, peeped out into the night, muttered something about the pace of the train, and then said suddenly:

"Are you actually obliged, Mr. Thorne, to go on to Berne by that early train?"

"I—am afraid so," said Geoffrey, surprised and puzzled.

"If a train towards evening would do as well, you might perhaps be so very good as to go with me to the oculist. You will think it foolish that a man of my age should be at all nervous."

"No, indeed."

"And you will think it strange that I should turn to you, a comparative stranger?"

"Don't say that, please," said Geoffrey quickly. "I feel as if I had known you all my life. I'd do anything for you, I would indeed; only my journey—well, sir, you don't seem to suspect the truth, but I would rather you knew it. My journey is on a matter of life and death."

"Life and death!" repeated Mr. Cantillon, a little breathless. "Now," he thought, "now comes in the revolver!"

"I know what you will think of me," Geoffrey went on. "You will be too kind to say it, but you will think me a presumptuous fool. I'll confess it to you all

the same. I love Miss Latimer. I love her with all the strength I have, with my whole being. It's nothing new, you know. As a child she was my queen. But I met her again the other day at Herzheim, for my misery—not that I wish it otherwise, not even now. I've shocked you," he said with a slight laugh. "You had no idea—you thought you were travelling with a reasonable being. But now you see why I can't stop in Paris, gladly as I would do anything to help you."

Mr. Cantillon listened with a very grave face. He was in the midst of the storm now. It seemed to him better to take the young man's confidence as it was given, and not to betray, at least at present, any former knowledge of his hopeless passion.

"I don't think you a presumptuous fool," he said. "You have my sympathy, my true and hearty sympathy, my dear Thorne."

Geoffrey's broad, brown, capable hand closed firmly on the thin and delicate one that was held out to him.

"Yes, I am very sorry for you," the Rector went on. "I fancied yesterday at Mr. Farrant's, from something in your face and manner, that you were a good deal affected by the news I brought. And, by-the-bye, you ought to hate me as a bringer of evil tidings. But I'm glad you don't. I'm very glad you have told me this. I don't quite understand altogether. For instance, I don't know why you are going back in this hurry to Switzerland. I should have advised staying quietly at home, or, if that was too painful, seeking 'fresh woods and pastures new.' Do you mind letting me know what takes you back?"

Geoffrey did not answer at once.

"Of course you don't understand how I feel," he said abruptly. "I can't accept it like this, at a distance. I must see her again."

"Forgive my asking—why?"

"I must tell her—I must hear it from herself. I can't bear it like this—like a sheep, without a word."

There was a kind of bitter resentment in his tone now, and the good face had changed, hardened suddenly by the pain that found its way into words. Geoffrey neither felt nor seemed the better, at present, for his confidence in Mr. Cantillon.

"You don't believe it, then? Or—I can't suppose that you thought Miss Latimer bound to you in any way. Had

anything of the kind passed between you and her?"

Mr. Cantillon's tone had changed a little, too, at the faintest, remotest suspicion of any reproach to Porphyria. It would not have taken more than this to alter his opinion of Geoffrey; and he had not forgotten Miss Thorne's words—that her brother was not without hope.

"We will get to the bottom of this," thought the Rector, "This fellow is honest; it will not be difficult."

"I think she knew," said Geoffrey slowly, "something of what I felt. I think she must have known that she was all the world to me. And she did not—of course she cannot have known what she was doing—but I tell you that she did not exactly discourage me. She told me I had better go home this autumn—and she asked me to paint Miss Farrant's portrait for her. She knew I wanted to do something for her."

He broke off suddenly, turning his face to the window. Mr. Cantillon glanced at his profile with its strained look, and at the clenched hand which lay on his knee.

"And these little friendly things make you fancy," he said deliberately, "that Miss Latimer understood you, and meant to encourage you? My dear Thorne, will you listen to plain English? I have no doubt she liked you and admired your talent. I have as little doubt that if she had read you rightly, you would not have had even these small marks of interest to feed upon. You have known and admired her, you say, since she was a child. Have you ever known her do anything dishonourable, or mislead anybody wilfully? Hardly possible, I think. And if I were you, I should take this fact alone, this fact of her engagement to Captain Nugent, as a certain sign that she never understood you, that she never meant to encourage you, and that this leaf of romance in your life must be closed at once and for ever."

"It is impossible," said Geoffrey. His lips moved, but Mr. Cantillon hardly caught the words.

"Pray explain to me with what motive you are going to her now," he said. "I must confess that I totally fail to understand you."

"I have told you—I must see her again. I must tell her what she has done. I cannot give her up like this, without a word. Of course I know I am not her equal—still I'm not a mere clodhopper. I can do something—if it is only worshipping and



serving her. I wish now that I had told her at Herzheim—then she might have chosen between me and him. But she can do that still."

"After she has given her word to him?" said the Rector, smiling in spite of himself.

"You don't understand me, sir," Geoffrey said, with a sort of desperate stiffness. "Some things are life or death to a man; this is so to me. This news has been as bad as death to me—worse, because I must outlive it, I suppose. Surely, if nothing else, I may have the comfort of hearing her say she is sorry for me."

There followed a long silence. Ten minutes perhaps had gone by, and Geoffrey had not spoken again or moved. Then the Rector laid his hand upon his knee.

"My dear fellow, you think me unsympathetic, and as hard as nails. I could tell you things to prove the contrary; but, after all, that is of no consequence. I took a fancy to you yesterday, and every hour since I have liked you better and better. One of the things I have liked in you has been what I sometimes feel lacking in myself—manliness. This is a manly, generous nature, I have said when I looked at you. I thought you a really fine fellow. Do you know that I am changing my mind?"

Another silence, for Geoffrey made no reply.

"Miss Latimer is happy," the Rector went on. "She wrote me a very short letter, telling me of her engagement, and every line of it breathed happiness. Now she has a generous and unselfish nature. You are going to her because you feel that you cannot keep away. You will tell her what will vex and distress her extremely. And why? You can't delude yourself with the fancy that she will throw over this other man for you. You know she will do nothing of the kind. You are only going to spoil her happiness, to wound the kindest heart in the world, 'with views of woe she cannot heal.' You are going to fill her with self-reproach on your account, which I feel sure is utterly undeserved. You are going to make a most unfortunate scene, to lower yourself in her eyes. And all because—it is the truth, and I must speak it plainly—all because you love yourself better than you love her. Yes, indeed, Thorne. You talk in this distracted way of your love for her. Nonsense, stuff! You don't even know what love is. Whose pleasure, whose happiness are you seeking in all this? Hers or

your own? I tell you, love is beyond you. You know nothing about it—no more than you know about true manliness or self-control."

Did the Rector think that he was in his pulpit at Bryans church? He raised his voice as if he did, and went on preaching to Geoffrey in words that came straight from his heart. The young man listened without a change of feature: the train roared and thundered on through the dark, but he did not lose a word of the sermon. The Rector was too much carried away by his own earnestness to hear him murmur presently:

"I never pretended to be anything I'm not. I said I would go—and I must go—I must."

It was not for nothing, as Mr. Cantillon might have thought, that Geoffrey Thorne had a long line of yeoman ancestors behind him.

## IN THE PEAK COUNTRY.

WHEN you mention Rowsley to one acquainted with Derbyshire, whether such acquaintance be with hills, rivers, dales, or health-giving waters, many pleasant associations will be conjured up. There is the "Peacock," that famous old inn which, from the seventeenth century downward, has offered its good cheer to succeeding generations of artists, fishermen, and the general crowd of tourists. And where is the river more fishable, the landscape more bright and full of charm? But it is as the station for Chatsworth that Rowsley concerns us this hot, dusty summer's day. White are the roads, and powdery is the dust, the summer's green all peppered with it, as it rises in clouds from the vehicles that are whirling to and fro. There is an omnibus for Chatsworth, according to trustworthy guide-books—an omnibus privileged to drive through the park—but the omnibus was filled before our train came in. And a dozen omnibuses would not contain the crowd that wants to reach Chatsworth in one way or another.

The best way, perhaps, is on foot, if one can get out of the hot, sweltering road, and the columns of dust that rise here and there; and, happily, at no great distance along the turnpike, where a brook comes babbling down from a cool-looking and shady wood, there appears in the stone wall beyond the little bridge a series of rough

slabs, set step fashion, which indicates in this country a practicable footpath beyond. And a happy little path it is, leading into the coolness of the wood, affording a mossy seat on the way, and the privilege of listening to the soft warbling of birds from the recesses of the wood. Little paths wind about in shade and chequered sunshine in the most inviting manner, but our way is indicated by a line of rude stone stiles, that can be traced across the open fields, where the kine are placidly feeding. From the hillside there is the gleam of a river here and there in the wooded valley; and puffs of dust from the highway, like the smoke from a line of skirmishers who are keeping up a brisk fusillade, curl among the trees. Then the footpath leads through fields and farmsteads down into a little village perched upon a pleasant little brook, with a solemn old manor house in grey stone, rather bare and gaunt, looking down on the cottage roofs. Crossing the dusty highway, we are fairly in the general footpath to Chatsworth. There is no mistaking the route. The boys of the village rush to open the gates, and little urchins lip, "Thith ith the way for Chattorth."

The footway crosses the river, and leads pleasantly along its margin towards the happy valley. It is the blue Derwent that comes wimpling down from the wild dales of the high Peak, past Hathersage and the grave of Little John, the famous henchman of Robin Hood. Sweet and pure it runs, falling over a curved stone weir with a soft, resounding murmur, the white foam of the falling water and the flashing line above giving effect to the slopes of emerald turf, the hanging woods, the rich glades edged with glowing colours, the balustraded terraces, the mellow magnificence of the great house itself, that now appears with all its grandiose surroundings.

A beautiful bridge, gleaming white among the foliage, brings us by a fine sweep of road under noble sycamores to the public entrance to the ducal palace, where all kinds of vehicles are drawn up, while a constant stream of visitors is arriving and departing. Now it is a four-horse brake from Buxton or Matlock filled with hopeful-looking patients who have broken loose for the day from hydropathic or other cures; or a waggon-load of teachers who are having their yearly treat; or a detachment of the Salvation Army; or a waggonette full of nurses, who have

perhaps come to keep an eye on the patients before-mentioned; or a string of vehicles on a contract job, bearing a cargo of neat, unadulterated trippers, who have bargained for the Peak in bulk, with Chatsworth and Haddon Hall thrown in. To these must be added a fair sprinkling of country-siders, who have come with all their bairns about them, including babes in arms and children of all sizes.

When a sufficient crowd has gathered the great iron gates are opened wide enough to admit the stream of people who trickle across the gravel to a chilly, dignified hall, where busts of distinguished statesmen glare icily upon us. And here we solidify into a kind of group, and are taken charge of by a young woman, who leads us round "au grand galop." Luckily, nobody is expected to describe the interior of Chatsworth, and we can enjoy in peace the march over acres of polished floors.

All is sumptuous, magnificent, leaving the palaces of Kings and Queens, as we have known them, a good way behind. But everywhere the best of the show is the splendid scene that is spread outside—the canals, the fountains, the wondrous gardens, the acres of flowering shrubs, the rosaries of indefinite extent, the richest sward, the brightest verdure, the choicest perfume charging the air with sweetness.

Still better is it to escape from the crowd of sightseers, and into the beauty and verdure of the park, with the cooling river, the white bridges, and the music of falling waters. Yet these accessories do not diminish the thirst that the broiling sun and sultry atmosphere has evoked.

"I wish you could 'arn the value of a pint," cries a jolly old eremite, who sells photos—when he can—by the bridge, to the driver of a fly, who has never a fare.

"It's a pity either on us can't," rejoins the driver in the same fraternal spirit.

The little colloquy suggests that if the funds were provided there would be no long distance to travel to procure the desired "quencher." And this proves to be the case, for just beyond the park gates lies the pretty little village of Edensor, a kind of toy village, comprised of cottages ornés, covered with creepers, and with pretty gardens about them, all scattered here and there, with no pedantic arrangement in the way of a street.

"I'm sure this house is too smart to sell things, mother," said the musical voice of a young woman, whose companion, a more

elderly personage, had halted at the door of one of these bijou mansions.

"Nonsense, Cynthia," said the elder; "here's a bill — 'Refreshments. Tea provided.'" And so there was, a very modest bill, inside the woodbine-covered porch. And within, in a pleasant shaded room, there was a long table spread with a white cloth, and sundry benches arranged as if guests were expected. But there was not a soul to be seen. Indeed, except the two ladies, who are clearly visitors like ourselves, not a creature have we seen about the village. After all, perhaps, is the whole a clever mechanical arrangement—a handle to be turned that sets the whole thing going, or possibly "a penny in the slot"?

Cynthia laughs pleasantly at the suggestion, but mamma cries "Nonsense!" and raps the table vigorously with her parasol, which strikes us as a hardy proceeding in this solemn and tranquil scene. But the lady's hardihood broke the spell, for suddenly there appeared a comely-looking old dame, who demanded in a somewhat injured tone:

"And what might ye be pleased to want?"

"Can we have hot water?" asks the other crustily.

"Well, it might be as you could," answers the dame with caution; but finding that her guests are of a peaceful character, she rapidly unbends, and discloses the fact that she has actually a kettle boiling on the kitchen fire—the kettle asserts itself at the moment by boiling over, and the old lady suddenly disappears to quell the tumult of the elements.

"Now, that's all right," said the elder Cynthia, mollified at the prospect of a cup of tea, and she opens her bag and produces a little canister of tea, a packet of sandwiches, and a cake. Everywhere in this country one may rely on a supply of hot water; farmhouses, cottages, all are ready to supply the wants of visitors in that way.

"Traditional hospitality! rubbish!" cries the downright Mrs. Cynthia; "threepence a head, that's what it is all over Derbyshire, including teapot and crockery, milk an extra, and find your own spoons!"

As for Cynthia the younger, she is a bright and pleasant girl, whose manner assuages her mother's asperities with much success. But our ways lie in different directions. Our track is towards Bakewell, and here we have experience of a Derbyshire

hill on a hot summer's day with the sun almost directly overhead, and shining down with great effect into a sunken lane with high stone walls on each side. Yet there is a fine view from the top of the hill of Chatsworth at large with all its features displayed. There, after all, is a bit of the forest primeval retained by the care of the Cavendishes. It was Chetel's worth or wood in the Saxon times, and of no great account to any one, till Bess of Hardwicke saw the advantages of the situation and planted the Cavendishes there, her favoured descendants.

The descent is rapid into Bakewell's pleasant town; with a hop, skip, and jump you descend the height it has cost so much labour to attain. It is a dignified little place, too, this Bakewell, with a county-town kind of air, and suggests itself as the capital of the Peak, though this might be disputed by other towns. "And where is this Peak of yours, anyhow?" asks an American who has travelled far to see it. He has formed the notion of a lofty mountain summit, after the fashion of Pike's Peak, or perhaps that of Teneriffe, standing boldly out from the surrounding scenery. But he has seen nothing as yet to correspond with his ideal; and the scenery in the neighbourhood he acknowledges to be pretty, but considers it insignificant when compared with the gigantic scale on which Nature has reared the mountains in his own favoured land.

There is a handsome church at Bakewell, which may be considered as the Westminster Abbey of the Peak country, for it contains the tombs of some of the most famous of its lords and rulers—notably that of Sir George Vernon, the King of the Peak, whose famous mansion of Haddon Hall, although not classed by our ancestors, like Chatsworth, as one of the wonders of the Peak, is and has long been its chief delight. And there is a fine mutilated cross which bears the stamp of high antiquity, and may even possibly be a relic of a British church in existence before the Saxon invasion.

With wide, clean streets, handsome, substantial stone houses, and good shops—especially in the pastrycook line, with Bakewell puddings strongly represented—which are delightful productions partaking of the nature alike of jam tarts and cheese-cakes—and with no slummy element in the outskirts, the streets running cleanly towards river, meadows, or pleasant hillsides, Bakewell is a pleasant place indeed. The river—it is the

Derbyshire Wye—comes sparkling down through the lush meadows, a pleasant field path winds here and there, leading in the direction of Haddon Hall. Hills close in gently around, and fringing woods descend and meet in the loftier groves that afford here and there a glimpse of a turret, or gleaming oriel, belonging to the old Hall. The simple outline of some more distant summit closes in the scene, which in soft beauty and luxuriance emulates the charm of the golden valley of the more famous but hardly more beautiful Monmouthshire Wye. Soft fleecy clouds whose shadows chase each other over the meadows, a deep blue sky, and bursts of flying sunshine, give a kind of enamelled finish to the landscape. But the flies! The Mayfly is rising from the river in its myriads, thousands are dimpling the surface of the streams, myriads are dancing away their brief existence over the meadows; and to these are joined the swarms of flies, aquatic and terrestrial, that abound and revel in this burst of summer weather. Green drakes and red spinners, dragonflies, and all the tribe of gauze-winged ephemerals, are sporting in the sunshine, or find a resting-place in the crevices of one's apparel.

There is something pleasantly mediæval about the arrival at Haddon Hall, where the gateway, with its pointed arch, is closed by the huge oaken gates studded with iron bolts, and a wicket opens into the shaded courtyard. Let us take a seat on the oaken bench outside under the shade of the hollow old sycamore. The way leads steeply down to the bridge and was made before coaches were thought of, or the necessity of having a carriage-drive had been imagined. Vehicles in plenty come rolling over the bridge and draw up in the open space below, and people are continually arriving at the gate, and in groups await their turn to enter. Not so many people as at Chatsworth, but still a respectable number, and those of every degree and from every part of the world.

There is the happy feeling at Haddon of visiting a place which the inmates have only just quitted, although the last of those inmates dates from the time of the Stuarts. The ceaseless stress and renewal caused by daily occupation has been spared the old house for near two hundred years, and everything bears the stamp of antiquity in the freshest of impressions. There is the old hall with its screens and musicians' galleries, the old antlers of the old stags that

were hunted by the old Kings of the Peak, the panels battered by the jack-boots of the eighty-four retainers who followed my lord to feast or fray. There is the dim dining - parlour, too, of a more refined age, with the delicate mouldings of its beautiful oriel window that looks out upon the ancient gardens; and the lovely drawing-room above with its oaken panels and fine carved cornices, done by native hands, doubtless, that had carved many an oaken screen and miserere. There are the old state bedrooms hung with tapestry, the faded hangings that were a little old-fashioned when Shakespeare wrote; and there is the beautiful gallery with its Jacobean dignity, the very newest of all the state rooms of Haddon, and yet scarcely newer than the Elizabethan age. Convincing, too, is the old four-poster with traditions of its having been pressed by the form of the Virgin Queen, and, even more so, the looking-glass in which she may have seen reflected her wrinkled, anxious features. And we climb up to the top of the tower, and look over the hoary battlements upon a scene of fertility and verdure, limited in extent but of wonderful richness and beauty, and below the mellow lines of the old Hall are easy to be traced the double quadrangle, the rooms of state, the nests of little chambers, the roof of the great hall, the turret of the little chapel.

It is when the pleasant young woman who takes us round throws open the doors of the little ante-room, and the light of day filtered through the overhanging trees reveals the old moss-grown steps, with the quaint balustrade, and the terraced walk beyond under the old yew-trees, that the real sentiment of the scene comes in. For these are Dorothy Vernon's steps, according to the tradition, by which she stole away on one night of festival to elope with her lover, who waited for her, with horses, by the bridge below.

And they are gone; ay, ages long ago  
Those lovers fled away into the storm.

And then we are left to stroll about a little in the ancient garden, where interlacing yew-trees form a pillared roof, where

Ghostly shapes  
May meet at noontide. . . .

The garden front of Haddon is, as everybody agrees, a perfect poem in stone—the calm, the seclusion, the desertion, all aid in the charm. And when you have gazed your fill, there is no more to be said or



done but to walk quietly away, and to hope that you may see the place again in your dreams.

But there is a significant tap on the shoulder from Cynthia's mamma—for Cynthia and her mother have turned up again—as we all go forth together into the outside world. "Hot water!" she suggests confidentially.

"Not at Haddon Hall?"

"Yes, at Haddon Hall. Follow me."

Yet it is not strictly in the Hall, but in a roomy old building with a great oak-framed roof, and an outside ladder leading to the upper chamber, which was probably a brewhouse in the days when the beards wagged all, over the potent ale, in the great hall. And here there is a homely kind of refreshment-room, and here we sit and sip Cynthia's mother's excellent Bohea, while the evening shades fall softly over Hall and wood, and close over the ancient gateway where people rest placidly on the great oak bench.

Perhaps after all the highway is the best route between Haddon and Bakewell, for it gives us in returning a succession of charming views of the old Hall. And if there is a little dust there are no tormenting flies.

Now at Bakewell station we meet our American friend in a certain state of elation. "I'm laid straight on to the Peak this time," he cries. "The Peak is at Castleton, and there I'm bound to go by the next train."

There is no railway to Castleton, indeed, nor within eight miles of the place; but that is a detail that does not concern the American. He reckons he'll get on by stage. But as for us, who are going in the same direction, the member of the party who knows most about the country suggests that we shall see most of the veritable country of the Peak by taking an early train in the morning to Chapel en le Frith, and walking over the hills to Peak Castle.

It is Sunday morning as it happens when we reach our station, and it seems from the number of people moving in different directions that chapels have increased numerically since the place took its name; though for the particular chapel in the forest thus commemorated there is only a modern church, of no great interest, to show. Of the forest itself, the great forest of the Peak, the hunting-ground of the Peverils, and of Kings and nobles after them, there is nothing to

be seen but barren moors, mosses, and naked hillsides. Yet there is a fine look-out over rolling hills and black-crested edges as we breast the steep ascent above the town. And now the rack of clouds is rolling up behind us, with driving sheets, half rain, half mountain mist, blotting out the prospect and wrapping us up in a chilly downpour. By sheltering here and there, now under the lee of a high stone wall, or among some bushes, or in a little hut the road-makers have left behind them, one avoids a wetting, and the clouds roll by and sunshine leaps forth, and everything looks bright, till the next shower looms up from the horizon.

When the summit of the hill range is reached, the view stretches over the wild and desolate region of Peak Forest, but still shows nothing beyond but the crests of unknown ridges. The road is finely terraced on the hillside, and below is a cup-like valley that looks like the bed of some ancient lake, with cattle feeding where of old monster reptiles may have wallowed. At first sight the basin has no outlet, but presently there opens out a strange kind of chasm, with sides of steep limestone cliffs topped with grassy knolls, a most strange and evil-looking pass, which bears the name of the Winyats or Windgates, because it is said there is always a strong breeze blowing up or down—that is, when there is not a gale or perhaps a tempest raging between those huge walls.

An old trackway passes through the Winyats, and the solitary figure of a man no bigger than a fly can be seen making his way into the giant chasm. But that is not our way. Our leader makes a sudden diversion to the left up a little narrow lane which seems to lead nowhere, and which does in fact lead into a mere foot-track. But the track leading between two rough rocky knobs brings us out on the crest of a steep ridge, with the sudden prospect of a grand valley of an altogether different character from anything we have yet seen. The head of the valley is lost in the wreathing clouds that gather there in portentous masses; but it stretches far and wide, without any visible outlet, fertile and cultivated, but shut in by savage heights and grim, austere-looking summits. Scattered here and there are solitary farmhouses, far apart, but nothing that can be called a hamlet is to be seen, and the aspect of the whole valley, peaceful and pleasant as it is, suggests a

loneliness and tranquillity that are almost sad. Close at hand, rising with a rugged sweep from where we stand, is the summit of Mam Tor, otherwise known as the Shivering Mountain, seamed with the entrenchments of some wild race that has passed away.

On the very floor of the valley beneath us, certain scratchings and diggings show where a new branch railway is to open up this lonely vale. But tourists may come and go, but yet they will never make the solitary vale appear peopled or move the solemn sadness that is the leading motive of the scene.

Following the lofty and noble ridge, and clearing the shoulder of the mother mountain, there opens out the view of a still more extensive vale, but of a totally different character. Sunny, pleasant, and smiling is the Vale of Castleton, with wide-stretching fields and pastures set in an intricate network of stone walls. The town with its grey roofs, the square sturdy church tower, appear in their sheltered nook, and above in a gleam of sunlight shines the square tower of Peveril's Castle on the Peak. There is no peakiness apparent here, for we look right down upon the Castle, and the mass of the hill above it dwarfs its pretensions, while the dark cleft in the hill that marks the cavern of the Peak seems little bigger than a mouse-hole.

But a rapid descent into the Vale of Castleton presents the scene from a different point of view. From the level floor of the valley the massive hills that seem to encircle the whole of the fertile plain show the full grandeur of their bulk. The knife-like ridges seen end on assume the appearance of tapering peaks, and thus it is small wonder if the first Saxon settlers who penetrated into this Ultima Thule of the plains called the place Peke-lond, and that the name has stuck to it ever since. That is the explanation, at all events, which we arrive at during an early dinner at the "Castle," where there is a baron of beef worthy of Peveril himself, and fit to be served in the halls of a King. But our theories do not satisfy the American, who has arrived in advance of us. He wants the whole Peak and nothing but the Peak, and he does not consider that yonder castle is placed where it ought to be, consistently with the published accounts of the same.

Yet the old tower looks down menacingly enough on the town below, and it seems

as if a well-aimed rock from its summit would crush anything in the way of a disturbance as one might crush an émeute of ants. And the climb up to the ruined enceinte of the Castle gives a respectful notion of what it would have cost to storm the eyrie of the lord of the Peak. And the keep when you reach it is a fine specimen of the later Norman architecture; a square tower with flat buttresses, but once enriched at the angles with fine, round columns, with characteristic bases and capitals. The site, too, is a marvellous one. From one side of the tower you look down into a gigantic cleft, over two hundred feet in depth, at the bottom of which is the famous Peak cavern. On the other side is a chasm nearly as deep, and the narrow neck of land between the Castle rock and the main body of the mountain has been so pared and scarped as to be practically inaccessible.

As for the Peak cavern, that is not shown on Sundays, and so must remain for us, like Yarrow by the poet, unvisited. And we have a long walk before us, over a lonely road across the hills. It is a mining district that we now make the acquaintance of, with here and there a deserted shaft with half-decayed belongings, and at places the mounds of fresh workings, and a smelting furnace, perhaps, standing in a gloomy hollow. And halfway there is a mining village with some of its cottages roofless, and resolving themselves into heaps of more or less squared stones; and at one point a narrow, rigid-looking lane pointing direct for Buxton, has the reputation of being a Roman road, leading, perhaps, to some wonderful store of treasure—say to the rich mine of silver lead that produced those "pieces" that are found every now and then stamped with the Roman trade marks. Briak walking brings us soon to Tideswell, where there was an ebbing well once famous, but like Will Watch "now forgot." And Tideswell is a mining village, too, but prosperous-looking, and with lads and lasses walking out in strings, but sedulously apart, and with the independent air of young people who have money in their pockets. There is a fine church, too, at Tideswell if one had time to stay; but there is a waggonette starting from the "Tideswell Inn," that rolls us comfortably through a succession of charming dales till we reach the loveliest of all, sweet Millar's Dale, that ought to be Millar's Daughter's Dale, in any way to

account for its charms. But our train is just due and there is not a moment to lose, even though we see Cynthia and her mother, who have just arrived. They are going to stop a week at Millar's Dale. Ah, why can't we stop a week there, too? But adieu, Cynthia, adieu Derbyshire, adieu the Peak! Our too brief holiday is over.

#### THE RED BEADS.

"KEEP them till we meet again," low the sailor said;  
The feathery bloom of tamarisks waved o'er each dark young head,  
The long waves crashed beside them, where the bark tossed on the tide,  
As the young man gave his token to his fair betrothed bride.

"Keep them, oh, my darling, we sail to-night for Spain,  
It may be many a weary day ere we two meet again;

Pray for me night and morning before our Lady's shrine,  
And show the beads when I return, pledge that you still are mine."

The red beads dropping listlessly through each small, sunburnt hand,  
She stood and watched the broad sail set, stood on the golden sand;

And threw, with quick, free gesture, her lover's parting back,  
As through the clear blue water his boat clove glittering track.

"Give me the beads as token," the gallant Spaniard said,  
As softly 'neath his passionate gaze drooped the shy, girlish head;

"And across the wild Basque Mountains to Saragossa fair,  
To my old castle walls I'll take my Queen as lady there.

"Give me the beads as token, my charger frets the rein;

The moon will light us on our flight to safety, love, and Spain;

Come, oh, my sweet, delay no more; come, doubt and fear are over,  
Give me the beads to say—"To-night come for your own, my lover."

And when the brave bark touched again on Biarritz rocky shore,

A fisherman looked long and keen for one who came no more

Dancing adown the pathway, where the tamarisks waved in air,

And those who loved him shrank to say, "She is as false as fair."

Deserted in a palace old, where Saragossa stands majestic o'er the olive slopes, while, through her feeble hands,

The red beads slowly filtered, the frail girl shivering wept,

To think how bright at Biarritz the long waves glittering swept!

#### JUDGEMENT HILL.

##### A WEST INDIAN STORY.

THE day had been hot to the limit of endurance, with the blue vault of the heavens pitilessly bare of clouds from

dawn. Beast and plant drooped in the fiery sunshine, and the slaves in the cane-fields beyond the little river moved sluggishly about their work, and had little to fear from their drivers' whips. Not a breath of wind stirred the air; Nature seemed utterly prostrate. The very cicadae, usually so vigorous, chirped lazily or were silent. When, however, the sun dipped behind the hills, one might have expected the inhabitants of this mountain valley to find some refreshment in the cool of the night; but this evening the air was close and heavy, though, indeed, the little river babbling along its course gave to the mind a sense of coolness not experienced by the body. In the negro village some more especially light-hearted slave had started a song, but it fell flat. His fellows were too exhausted to care for song and dance.

As the sun sank, a party of travellers on horseback came slowly up the valley road towards the plantation, and, crossing by the ford, mounted to the owner's residence. As they approached, the planter himself came out upon the high stone steps before the door, and his shout brought to the front of the building a numerous contingent of house slaves, who welcomed the visitors with a burst of chatter and laughter. With much noise and confusion, occasioned by the presence of too many helpers, the new-comers alighted and mounted to the head of the steps, where they halted as if to take in the view.

And truly it was a scene beautiful enough to make one linger. A range of hills, whose jagged outline loomed clear against the western sky, shut out the prospect in that direction, and, like the back of some great lizard, wound sinuously northward to join the mass of the Blue Mountains, whose peak rose dim in the evening light. On this—the eastern—side a small alluvial plain, watered at its nearer edge by a small river, with its bordering wealth of dumb-cane, fern, and other herb, followed the windings of its girdling hills. The plain, now lying in the shadow of the hills, was planted with sugar-cane, whose rich green leaves and swollen stems gave promise of a wondrous crop. Near to the river stood the great white building known as the boiling-house; a little to the right the mill; and, still further away, the huts, partly hidden in a luxuriant growth of fruit-trees, which formed the village of the slaves, both white and black. For, curious as it may seem, there were white slaves

on the estate—remnants of Monmouth's rebels, and outcasts and criminals from England and Ireland. They had been bought with the planter's money, and were as much his goods and chattels as their black brethren.

On this side of the river the land rose sharply to form a ridge far loftier than the opposite one, so that the public road—if the rough track may be so designated—took here a sudden upward turn. At one point immediately above the river-ford the ridge uplifted itself into a sharp peak, a clear three hundred feet above the valley, and just below this, nestling closely into the mountain side, at a spot where a little level ground offered an inducement, was the Great House, or planter's residence. This building had few pretensions to architectural beauty—fewer, indeed, than the boiling-house across the river. It was a long, low structure, with a lower portion of stone, and an upper storey of wood. An arch of stone steps gave access to the front door, by which one entered a wide passage running the whole length of the house. This passage, or piazza, as it was called, was lighted by numerous windows, protected on the outside by heavy wooden shutters, useful in times of hurricane. Opening from this piazza into the inner rooms were also other windows, serving not so much for lighting as for cooling these apartments; and it seemed to have been the object of the local builders of two hundred years ago to get as many doors and windows into each room, in which effort they had succeeded admirably. So the dining-room, which lay next to the piazza, had a door and two windows opening into this passage, two windows looking out upon the canefields, a door leading to the back part of the building, and two other windows between it and the bedrooms.

The furniture of the Great House was of that cumbersome nature which seemed to suit our forefathers, yet modified somewhat to adapt itself to the luxurious life of the early planters. It was for the most part of mahogany, carved and decorated so as to reflect in some degree the position and consequence of the master of the house. In the dining-room the most noticeable feature was the great sideboard, with its semicircular front and wealth of deep drawers, some fitted for the keeping of wine, and the rest devoted to the custody of the various garniture of the table. Its top was adorned with a display of glass and silver ware such as only the

Governor's house could equal, and in the middle, flanked on either side by tall silver candelabra, was a great punch-bowl. The punch-bowl was an institution with the old planter. Every morning were its contents renewed, and no sooner did a visitor arrive than he was brought to the sideboard and a glass of punch ladled out for him. In these times, when taverns were not, every man's house was open to his fellow, and whatever the vices of the inhabitants may have been, that of inhospitality could never be charged against them.

Preparations for a banquet in honour of the planter's visitors were going forward. The house slaves were busy between the dining-room and the kitchen in the yard. One whose special duty it was to see after the wine was occupied in keeping moist the muslin jackets in which the bottles were placed, so that by the evaporation of the water in the dry, hot air the liquid might be brought to a temperature pleasant to the palate. At seven the meal was served with much show of luxury. Behind each chair stood a servant to wait on the guest before him, three or four were at the open door to receive and bring in the dishes as they came from the kitchen, and a whispering from the passage denoted that there were several more hanging about outside the door. A half-caste, clad in livery, presided over the servants in the capacity of major-domo or butler, and saw that none of the company wanted for anything.

At the head of the table sat the planter, a tall, spare man, of some forty years. His good features, light curling moustache and pointed beard, a manner at once easy and assured, and, above all, his speech marked the refinement of good birth and breeding, and one might easily have been deceived by these outward graces to count him for what he was not. Free as was life in Jamaica—at that time the most brilliant dependency of England—untrammelled and unlicensed as was the conduct of most of the settlers from Governor downwards, yet this man's career was freer from restraint, more reckless in its immorality, more diabolical in its contrivances for providing unholy entertainment for himself and his boon companions, than that of any of his neighbours. In a community that winked at all the faults and most of the vices of poor human nature, he had acquired for himself a reputation and notoriety which confined his friendship to a very small circle. Sprung



from a noble family, he had squandered the greater part of his patrimony in England, and, finding his course in that country was almost run, had joined the tide of penniless adventurers, criminals fleeing from justice, ruined men of business, cut-throats and Jews, which now set in strong flow to the new Eldorado of Jamaica. More wise than his fellows, he had obtained, soon after his arrival, a patent of the land for a sugar estate, and contrived to borrow the money for the purchase of slaves and other stock. The virgin soil yielded a golden harvest, and within very few years the broken-down adventurer found his condition restored to its early state of ease.

These were the days of the buccaneers, who, under the guise of fair trade, carried on the freest piracy, plundering, not at all to the dissatisfaction of the English Government, the settlements of the French and Spanish, and not infrequently, when it might be done with safety to themselves, committing acts of robbery and violence upon the ships of their own nationality.

Many of the buccaneer captains were adventurers of good birth who, like the planter, had wasted their property, and now recruited their fortunes on the high seas. They were in close league and partnership with merchants and others, who found the wherewithal to fit out the ships for the expeditions, and who took a great share of the plunder as a reward for the risk they ran. The planter, not content with the gains accruing to him from his sugar estate, had joined partnership with one of the buccaneers, and it was his colleague himself who had arrived that evening. Their ship, in company with another, had just arrived at Port Royal from plundering the settlements of the French islands, and never in the history of the place had such wealth been brought to it. Fabulous stories still exist of the abundance and richness of the booty, of the vast number of gold coins, of the gold and silver vessels, of the fine silks; and men tell that there were no warehouses large enough to store the wealth, and that it was piled up on the wharves and guarded day and night by armed sailors.

With the buccaneer there had arrived a dark girl, not without some pretensions to beauty, whose broken speech and languid manner betokened her creole origin; a red-faced, husky-voiced captain of the garrison; and a thin, pale merchant, with whom

both buccaneer and planter had business relations.

Such was the company gathered around the table at the Great House. There was an unmistakable air of jollity about them as tongues, loosened by wine, wagged busily, and the laugh and jest went round. The contagion of merriment spread to the servants, whose laughter and chatter came audibly from the passage without. They, too, having got possession of a bottle of wine, were making merry.

The dinner was nearly ended, the hue of the officer's face was deeper than at first, and his voice more hoarse, and the pale face of the merchant wore a somewhat hectic flush. All were evidently preparing for a carousal which would last till each man was incapable of drinking any more wine, and then the servants would bear him off to bed.

At this point an incident occurred destined, if not to shorten the carousal, yet to divest it of much of its customary enjoyment. As one of the servants was handing a bottle of wine, a low, inarticulate cry burst from his lips, and he let the bottle fall to the table, shivering into pieces a glass or two, and sending a stream of wine into the very bosom of his master. With an oath the planter snatched up the bottle, intending to send it at the fellow's head for his carelessness, but as he looked up and saw the stricken look upon the countenances of his guests, an intimation of something unusual caused him to follow their gaze with his eyes. Standing in the doorway which led from the room to the front piazza was a shape whose sudden and unexpected appearance sufficed to strike a chill of terror to the minds of the revellers. In the dimness of that part of the room the figure seemed of gigantic proportions; but to one nearer to the door it would have been found to be that of a tall, gaunt man, clad in doublet, breeches, and hose of a sober brown hue. A pair of eyes which burnt with a fierce intensity was turned upon the company with a truly mesmeric effect. They would fain have escaped the terribly earnest gaze if any power had been left to their bodies, but they were enchained by a strength greater than theirs. Suddenly the strange visitant began to speak, and his first words deepened in the minds of his hearers the impression of his unearthly origin.

"Workers of iniquity! I bring to you this message. Abandon your evil ways and turn, for a day of wrath is at hand. Now

you eat and drink and are clothed in fine linen, and make merry over your fine meats and strong wines, but to-morrow you shall be fed with tears. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. You are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; you spend your days in wickedness and your nights in sloth. The Lord will bring upon you your own iniquity and shall cut you off in your wickedness, yea! the Lord God shall cut you off."

For a moment the speaker's voice trembled as if in pity for his audience, and then rose in one passionate outburst.

"Fools! Infidels! Followers of Baal! The Lord reigneth. God is a jealous God! Why seek ye to destroy yourselves? Flee from the wrath to come. I see the hand of the Almighty raised to strike and none may stay it. The hills shall melt as wax before His hand. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay!"

Hardly had these threatening words passed the lips of the old Puritan than the report of a firearm rang out clear and loud, and the room was filled with the pungent, heavy smoke of the powder. It was the buccaneer, who had drawn a pistol and fired. The spell was broken; the affrighted servants fled in a body from the room; chairs were thrown violently to the floor as the company sprang to their feet. The planter, still grasping his bottle by the neck, rushed to the doorway and thence to the entrance. Nothing was to be seen; but, rising distinctly to the sharpened hearing of the listeners, there came through the still night the clatter of a horse's shoes on the road below. Silently each listened to the sound while it grew less and less audible, and was finally lost in the distance; and then they looked blankly into each other's faces.

In spite of the desperate efforts of the planter to restore animation to his guests, merriment had fled from the Great House for that night and would not be coaxed to return. Though the drinking was as hard and as continuous as on former occasions, the customary riot and buffoonery which accompanied these carousals were absent, and the servants carried master and guests to bed at an unusually early hour.

The night kept hot with a brilliant moon; not a trace of mist gathered in the valley to cool the drooping shrubs. The sun rose in a cloudless sky, shining down upon an earth unrefreshed by shade

of night. The shell which was sounded in early morning by the slave-drivers brought out the gangs to work among the canes, and pitiful, indeed, was the condition of the white bond-servants as they dragged themselves from their miserable huts into the fields. Hot as were the previous day and night, this day was hotter. The heavens seemed made of molten brass, pouring down upon wretched mortals a fiery heat, until the surface of the earth cracked and the air above it was a mass of quivering movement. Never had any one experienced such heat in June.

The company at the Great House had taken coffee in bed, as was the custom, and at eleven o'clock were gathered around the table for the "second breakfast." The incident of the previous night had lost most of its disagreeableness, and they could now jest and laugh at the effect it had had upon them. The meal progressed; it was twenty minutes to twelve.

"Thunder in a clear sky," suddenly exclaimed the planter, with a reminiscence of his early schooling. "The gods are for us. Drink, gentlemen, to a long and merry life."

A distant rumbling in the heavens occasioned the remark, and the proposed toast was about to be drunk when a louder report resounded through the hills. All started at the suddenness of the thing, and the slaves in the fields dropped their implements. The earth gave a gentle heave, and men knew what was upon them. Paralysed with fear, they awaited the second shock of the earthquake. It followed quickly upon the first, throwing the glasses from the table and rocking the house, while doors banged and windows rattled. Still it was not a very severe shock; each of the company had experienced worse shocks than this. Then suddenly, as if Mother Earth had gathered herself together for one final effort to get rid of her human encumbrances, there came such a shiver through the whole fabric of the island that men were dashed to the ground, houses levelled, the very earth gaped, and the greater part of Port Royal, with all its wealth and wickedness, was swallowed up by the sea. And upon the planter's abode and household fell that vengeance foretold by the Puritan; for the whole mountain overhanging the house flung its great bulk into the valley beneath and overwhelmed everything in one great crash of ruin.

To this day there remains the rough, uneven slope of rock, rubble, and earth under which lie the Great House and the bones of its occupiers. No tree, strange as this may seem, will grow there, only the most rank and foul herbs flourish on the spot; and over it hangs the awe inspired by this fearful end. It is the place of desolation—the Judgement Hill.

### WOODEN LEGS.

WHO first invented wooden legs? Vulcan was a cripple, and in consequence of his difficulty in walking he is said to have made himself an artificial support of gold; but, as Mr. Thoms pointed out long ago, gold is not for every cripple, and every myth is backed by a reality. Again, the devil, as represented in the drawings and engravings of the Middle Ages, is a compound of Pluto and Vulcan. The latter was ejected from Olympus, the devil was cast out of heaven. Vulcan was frequently figured with a beard and pointed cap. In the edition of Tyndale's New Testament, printed by Jugge in 1552, there is a woodcut representing the devil sowing tares, and wearing not only the Vulcanian beard and pointed cap, but also a wooden leg. Another mediæval representation of the devil with a wooden leg may be found in one of the paintings on the panels of the pulpit in the ancient little church of Heligoland. It is only fair, however, to point out that the artificial support in the Tyndale woodcut resembles more a clumsy, one-legged stool, upon which the lame leg appears to be doubled up at the knee, than a substituted wooden limb. After all, this identification, so far as regards costume and lameness, of the mediæval devil and the ancient Vulcan, although it opens up a curious field of speculation to those who are learned in matters of comparative mythology, yet throws no certain light on the question as to when the wooden leg as we now know it—a complete artificial substitute for a lost limb—was first invented.

It is impossible to give an exact and definite answer to the question; but there is some evidence to show that in the sixteenth century a wooden leg was regarded as somewhat of a novelty. One of the most famous surgeons France has ever produced was Ambroise Paré. He was surgeon to several of the French Kings, and when, as a Protestant, his life was in

danger, at the time of the St. Bartholomew massacre, the King, Charles the Ninth, saved him by shutting him up in his own closet. His works, filling a great folio, were published towards the end of the sixteenth century, and went through many editions. In the fifth edition, published at Paris in 1598, there is figured a wooden leg which is practically the same as the article in use at the present time, and Paré gives such a very minute description of it that it is only reasonable to conclude that such a contrivance was then an unfamiliar object.

The one discovery above all others that has made Paré famous for all time, was the plan, which he was the first to suggest, of tying the arteries after the surgical removal of a limb. In one part of his writings he gives a curious account of a case of successful amputation, in which he appears to have anticipated one of the latest of modern fads, and to have used music as medicine. The patient had been wounded in battle. The famous surgeon took him in hand, successfully amputated the limb, using his new plan of tying the arteries, and when the sufferer began to mend, prescribed what the quaint English of the translation describes as "a consort of violins and a jester to make him merry." In a month the patient was able to hold himself up in a chair, and was carried down to the gate of his castle to see the people pass by.

A successful issue to such an operation must have been of rare occurrence, for we are told that "the country people of two or three leagues about, knowing they could see him, came the first day, male and female, to sing and dance pell-mell in joy of his amendment, all being very glad to see him, which was not done without good laughing and drinking."

"The camp being broken up," concludes Paré, "I returned to Paris with my gentleman, whose leg I had cut off. I dressed him, and God cured him. I sent him to his house merry with his wooden leg, and was content, saying that he had escaped good cheap not to have been miserably burned."

The success of Paré's comparatively simple and safe mode of procedure, as compared with the barbarous methods formerly in use, which inflicted horrible agony on the sufferer, and too often ended in failure, must have led to a considerable growth in the demand for artificial limbs, and the wooden leg, which, if not invented by the great French surgeon must certainly have been greatly improved by him, became

a more frequent adornment of the wounded heroes of those fighting days. Allusions to it as the common reward of the soldier's or sailor's valour are plentiful in our own Elizabethan literature. Nashe speaks of the young fire-eater who would go to the wars for honour, and return with a wooden leg, "when he may buy a captainship at home better cheape;" and of the young sailors who must needs be men of war, and wear silver whistles, but some of whom will come home with wooden legs and some with none. Hogarth has pointed the same moral in his picture of "Chairing the Member," where a very prominent figure is a sailor with a wooden leg. In Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy, "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," a cripple is taunted with his lameness by a soldier:

Dost thou see how thou pull'st  
Thy legs after thee, as they hung by points?

whereon the cripple retorts:

Better to pull 'em thus, than walk on wooden ones.

Later, in Restoration times, the dramatists were still fond of associating soldiers and artificial limbs. In Wycherly's "Plain Dealer," Olivia, rallying Manly, says: "We women adore a martial man, and you have nothing to make you more one, or more agreeable, but a wooden leg." In another play of the same era, Killigrew's "Parson's Wedding," there is a curious lady who is said to hate a man with all his limbs, and so "her gentleman-usher broke his leg last dog-days, merely to have her set it." But the devotion of this hero nearly cost him his life, for gangrene attacked the wounded limb, which spoiled the jest and his ambling before my lady. A hand-saw was applied, says the narrator, to his "gartering-place, and now the rogue wears booted bed-staves, and destroys all the young ashes to make him legs."

This eccentric lady would have doted on the unfortunate crane that Evelyn saw in 1664 in the St. James's Park menagerie. This poor bird, having broken one of its legs, had lost the limb, and had acquired instead a wooden leg and thigh, made by a soldier, and so accurately jointed that the creature could walk and use it as well as if it had been natural. Not long ago a cow, similarly provided with an artificial leg, might have been seen at the veterinary hospital in the north-west of London.

The prevalence in the seventeenth century of these mementoes of hard-fought fields naturally led to their use by impostors for the purpose of beguiling the

charitable. In the old play of the "Beggars' Bush" there is a catalogue of the cheats then in use by sturdy beggars, and among their means of exciting compassion were "crutches, wooden legs, false bellies, forced eyes and teeth," with other gruesome devices. Most of these dodges are still part of the stock-in-trade of the begging fraternity. Hazlitt has a story of an old gentleman who used to walk out every afternoon, carrying a gold-headed cane, in the fields opposite Baltimore House, which were then open and crossed by footpaths. He was often accosted by a beggar with a wooden leg, whom repeated alms only made the more importunate. One day when the rascal was more persistent than usual in his annoyance, a well-dressed stranger came up, who said to the old gentleman: "Sir, if you will lend me your cane for a moment I'll give him a good thrashing for his impertinence." The victim smilingly complied, but as the stranger lifted the cane to apply it to the beggar's shoulders, the rascal whipped off his wooden leg and ran away at full speed. His would-be chastiser took up the chase; the faster the beggar ran the faster followed the pursuer, until, to the great astonishment of the old gentleman, both pursuer and pursued, having crossed the fields, turned a corner, and nothing more was seen of either of them. The sham cripple did not return, neither did the gold-headed cane. There is but little novelty in the ways of knavery. Most of the tricks of the begging fraternity are as old as the hills, and may be reckoned among the time-honoured institutions of the country.

Wooden-legged characters appear occasionally in fiction, but on the whole they have not been very well treated. There seems sometimes to be an assumed connection between wooden legs and wickedness. One of the earliest maimed characters in English fiction is the amiable but overpoweringly nautical Lieutenant Hatchway in Smollett's "Peregrine Pickle." His character may pass muster, but what can one say of that hypocritical rascal Silas Wegg in "Our Mutual Friend"? Was he not a "literary man, with a wooden leg"? a decoration which, to Mr. Boffin, appeared greatly to enhance the value of Mr. Wegg's remarkable attainments. Wegg stumped his way into the Golden Dustman's affections, and read that simple old gentleman strange tales from his eight volumes of the "Decline And-Fall-Of-The-Rooshan-Empire," bound in red and gold,



with purple ribbon in every volume to keep the place where they left off, at the not excessive rate of fivepence per hour, and when he "dropped into poetry" was kind enough to make no extra charge, but only asked to be considered so far in the light of a friend. Mr. Wegg is succeeded in the possession of villainy and a wooden leg by that very truculent, timber-toed knave, Long John Silver. No reader of "Treasure Island" is ever likely to forget Long John, the leader and arch-conspirator of the piratical crew of the "Hispaniola."

Silas Wegg, by the way, is not the only wooden-legged character in "Our Mutual Friend." A more amiable victim of amputation legs, as soldiers call such adornments, appears at the marriage of John Rokesmith and Bella Wilfer, only to disappear on the next page, in the shape of old Gruff and Glum, the pensioner, who pegged away on his timber toes—he had two of them—"as if he were scoring furiously at cribbage," to be present at the wedding, and afterwards kissed the bride's hand right gallantly, and retired to unlimited tobacco and beer.

In "Martin Chuzzlewit," mention is made of Mr. Gamp, deceased, who was blessed with an artificial limb, which was finally disposed of in a very remarkable manner indeed.

"Ah, dear!" said Mrs. Gamp to Mr. Pecksniff; "when Gamp was summoned to his long home—and I see him a lying in Guy's Hospital with a penny-piece on each eye, and his wooden leg under his left arm—I thought I should have fainted away; but I bore up." To this obituary notice may be added the fact, important to biographers, who always value a reference to engraved portraits of their heroes, that over Mrs. Gamp's mantelpiece was suspended a portrait of Mr. Gamp, deceased, drawn at full length, so that the likeness might be rendered more obvious and forcible by the introduction of the wooden leg. Mr. Pecksniff, when he was carried upstairs, asking vainly for a little drop of something to drink, after the famous dinner at Todgers's, and had been put to bed, appeared shortly afterwards, strangely attired, on the top landing, and addressed the inmates of Todgers's in the hall below. "'This is very soothing,' said Mr. Pecksniff. 'Extremely so. Cool and refreshing; particularly to the legs! The legs of the human subject, my friends, are a beautiful production. Compare them with wooden legs, and observe the difference between

the anatomy of nature and the anatomy of art. Do you know,' he" continued, leaning over the bannisters, with an odd recollection of his familiar manner among new pupils at home, 'that I should very much like to see Mrs. Todgers's notion of a wooden leg, if perfectly agreeable to herself!'" Unfortunately Mr. Pecksniff was unceremoniously taken back to his room, and the key turned upon him, and Mrs. Todgers's notion of a wooden leg remains a matter of speculation. As to Mr. Richard Swiveller, it may reasonably be assumed that when he made his complaint to Mr. Quilp, "Yet loved I as man never loved that hadn't wooden legs," he was not so much thinking of wooden legs themselves as availing himself of the first convenient rhyme to "Cheggs."

One other appearance of wooden legs in literature may be mentioned. In the one hundred and nineteenth letter of Goldsmith's exquisite but little read "Citizen of the World," there is a long narrative by a poor disabled soldier of his adventures ashore and afloat. In his capacity for preserving his cheerfulness this man was a perfect Mark Tapley. At the beginning he says that he cannot pretend to have gone through more than others. "Except the loss of my limb," he continues, "and my being obliged to beg, I don't know any reason, thank Heaven, that I have to complain; there are some who have lost both legs and an eye; but, thank Heaven, it is not quite so bad with me."

The humble philosopher then describes his early workhouse training, his apprenticeship to a farmer, succeeded by a wandering life, working when he could get employment, and starving when he could get none, until, for the heinous offence of knocking down a hare, he was sentenced to be transported to the plantations. This did not daunt him. "People may say this and that of being in gaol; but, for my part, I found Newgate as agreeable a place as ever I was in in all my life." From prison he was carried on board ship, and in time, after losing many of his companions by fever, was put ashore and sold to a planter. When his time was expired he returned to England, became a soldier, fought and was wounded at Fontenoy, and when peace was made, enlisted in the East India Company's service. He fought the French in six battles, and came home with forty pounds saved, but only to be seized by the press-gang and sent on board a man-of-war. His ship was taken by the French,

he lost his forty pounds, and was thrown into prison. He escaped with a companion and went to sea in an open boat, whence they were rescued by an English privateer, which in its turn was taken by a French man-of-war, which again was retaken by an English privateer, and the adventurer was once more in England, having lost in the last action a leg and four fingers of the left hand.

"Had I had the good fortune," remarked this cheerful cripple in winding up his narrative, "to have lost my leg and use of my hand on board a King's ship, and not a privateer, I should have been entitled to clothing and maintenance during the rest of my life; but that was not my chance. One man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and another with a wooden ladle. However, blessed be God, I enjoy good health, and have no enemy in this world that I know of but the French and the Justice of the Peace." And the veteran stumped off, leaving the Chinese philosopher possessed with the belief that an habitual acquaintance with misery is the truest school of fortitude and philosophy.

The wooden leg has made no great figure on the stage, except in one conspicuous instance; but it played a humble part in the training of young Edmund Kean. Edmund had an uncle named Moses Kean, who had a wooden leg, and when the young actor was studying "Hamlet" under his early friend and teacher, Miss Tidswell, and had to say the words, "Alas, poor Yorick!" she at first taught him to say "Alas, poor uncle!" so that the recollection of the latter's loss might dispose Edmund's face to seriousness. But the one prominent theatrical appearance of a wooden leg was in the case of the famous Foote. Singularly enough, some years before he lost his leg, Foote played in one of his farcical pieces, called "The Orators," the part of Peter Paragraph, in which he had to simulate the possession of an artificial limb. Paragraph was a satirical portrait of a certain Dublin alderman and newspaper proprietor named George Faulkner, who, being far from young, decidedly plain, and the possessor of a wooden leg, was accustomed to boast of his own personal attractions and of the powerful influence they had with the ladies. A year or two after the piece was first produced, Foote was thrown from his horse and sustained a fracture of the leg, which necessitated amputation. The actor's spirit was not easily broken. He at once

declared that he should now be able to imitate George Faulkner better than ever. Peter Pindar was of the same opinion. In his "Bozzy and Piozzi" he wrote:

When Foote his leg by some misfortune broke,  
Says I to Johnson, all by way of joke,  
Sam, sir, in Paragraph will soon be clever,  
He'll take off Peter better now than ever.

In fact, the loss of his leg made Foote a more amusing actor and a more irresistible "draw" than he had been before. O'Keefe says that one could not help pitying him sometimes as he stood upon his one leg, leaning against the wall, with sorrowful face, while his servant was adjusting the stage false leg; but as soon as that was done, he instantly resumed "all his high comic humour and mirth, hobbled forward, entered the scene, and gave the audience what they expected—their plenty of laugh and delight." A year or two after his accident he wrote a farce called the "Lame Lover," with a wooden-legged hero, Sir Luke Limp, to suit himself. Charlotte, whom Sir Luke courts, declares that it would be a pretty thing truly for a girl at her time of life to be tied to a man with one foot in the grave, and is not to be appeased by the fact that the knight is proud of his leg, and had often been heard to declare that he would not change his bit of timber for the best flesh and bone in the kingdom. A friend once spoke jestingly to Foote about his game leg, whereon the actor retorted, "Pray, sir, make no allusion to my weakest part; did I ever attack your head?"

Wooden legs have figured occasionally with great effect, and sometimes rather comically, in real life. When George the Third visited Weymouth in July, 1789, shortly after his recovery from his first attack of illness, the Mayor and burgesses of that town presented him with an address, and asked leave to kiss hands. His Majesty consented, but as the Mayor advanced to take the Queen's hand, just as he might that of any Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Mayor, a member of the Court, Colonel Gwynn, whispered: "You must kneel, sir!" But the Mayor took no notice and kissed the Queen's hand erect. As he retired, the Colonel again whispered him: "You should have knelt, sir!"

"Sir," answered the Mayor, "I cannot."

"Everybody does, sir."

"Sir, I have a wooden leg."

The excuse was a good one, but as Fanny Barney, who tells the story, says, the absurdity of the matter followed when

all the rest did the same, taking the same privilege without the same excuse. A few years later, in Paris, a wooden leg saved the life of the well-known Gouverneur Morris, then the American Minister to France. At the time when the Parisian mob was in a very rabid state, and it was dangerous to appear well-dressed or to ride in a carriage, Morris was driving one day through the city. A mob collected, yelling against him as an aristocrat, and denunciation as an aristocrat was generally followed by summary execution; but the American Minister did not lose his presence of mind. He thrust his wooden leg out of the carriage window and shouted: "An aristocrat! Yes, one who lost his leg in the cause of American liberty."

The mob cheered and let him pass. The Minister had really lost his leg by a carriage accident in 1780. A friend at the time comforted him by pointing out how much freer from temptation to dissipation he would be with only one leg. Morris replied: "My good sir, you argue the matter so handsomely, and point out so clearly the advantages of being without legs, that I am almost tempted to part with the other."

After the Napoleonic wars wooden legs were very common sights in Paris. When Samuel Rogers visited the French capital a few months after Waterloo, he wrote to his sister that he thought there were more men there without a leg or an arm than he had ever seen anywhere. "At a dance on the boulevard last night," he writes, "a Frenchman quadrilled and waltzed on a wooden leg with an agility and neatness of execution such as I have not often seen on a natural one."

Another famous American possessor of a wooden leg was the fighting Peter Stuyvesant, the last Dutch Governor of New York. The heroic Peter was so proud of his appendage that he often declared he valued it more than all his other limbs put together. He had it curiously inlaid with silver; a proceeding which gave rise to a legend that he wore a silver leg, like an early version of Miss Kilmansegg, whose precious leg, by the way, was made of gold. Stuyvesant ruled New York, or New Amsterdam, as it was then called, from 1647 to 1664, and a very vigorous ruler he was. The history of his reign may be read by the curious in the veracious chronicle of Diedrich Knickerbocker.

Among noteworthy possessors of artificial limbs, lovers of Scott will not forget Dominie Thamson. George Thomson, according to what Lockhart calls the universal credence of the neighbourhood of Abbotsford, was held to be in many respects the original of the inimitable Dominie Sampson. He was the son of the minister of Melrose, and for many years was domesticated at Abbotsford, as tutor and librarian. Notwithstanding his wooden leg, which replaced a limb lost in boyhood, Thomson was vigorous, athletic, a bold rider, and an expert at singlestick. Scott used to say that in the dominie, like himself, accident had spoiled a capital life-guardsmen.

A little more than a quarter of a century ago a wooden leg nearly changed the course of European history. A year or so before the war between Prussia and Denmark, which preceded the great struggle between France and Germany, Bismarck was staying at Biarritz. One morning, accompanied by a huge dog, he was walking on a road which runs along the base of a cliff, protected from the sea by a low wall, when he met an old French naval captain, with a wooden leg, but powerfully built and of peppery temper. The dog became unduly attentive to the captain's leg, and the Frenchman struck at the animal with the butt of his fishing-rod. Bismarck swore, and the sailor replied in the same dialect. From language they came to blows, and in a few moments Bismarck found that, strong as he was, the angry Frenchman was lifting him bodily on to the parapet of the wall. Another minute and he would have been in the rapid current of the sea below, and what would have been the course of European history during the last twenty-five years? But at the critical moment help arrived—by the irony of fate in the shape of an equerry of the Emperor Napoleon—the timber-toed veteran was defeated, and the unification of Germany and of Italy was secured.

## THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

*Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.*

### CHAPTER XIII.

"THERE, that's all worth reading," said Miss Pexton, "unless you want to look at the signature. Here it is at the bottom,

'Fanny Burridge, now Pexton,' all lawfully witnessed, 'Martha Pexton,' that's me, and 'Albert Fosbery,' that's the lodger as took it down. Now you can say whether it's worth twenty pounds to you or not," and she folded the sheets together and put them back in the envelope.

"It is not worth twenty pence to me personally," I answered her very slowly, for I was calculating its possible value in Admiral Gordon's eyes, "but——"

"Then I shall go straight down to Shropshire and chance getting twice as much from Mr. Vernon to put it in the fire."

"No, I don't think you will do that. I should not imagine that Mr. Vernon cares in the least what your stepmother's opinion of him may be. Besides, I see that the date is three months old. You have no doubt tried to do business with him already."

That was a good shot, I saw directly.

"Well, suppose you make an offer," she said sullenly, "or perhaps you don't care if I make away with it now," and she made a feint of tossing it in the fire.

"I care just one pound," I told her. "And then I may be offering more than it is worth. How do I know that you have not manufactured the whole statement yourself, signatures and all? You ought to have got a magistrate, or at least a clergyman to sign, to make it worth anything."

I fancied by her face that she had heard that objection before.

"Then all the people interested in it are dead and gone except Mr. Vernon and Josephine; that takes away from its value."

She gave a little scoffing laugh.

"Do you really think you can take me in that way? Well, as a friend of the late Mrs. Vernon," with sarcastic emphasis, "suppose we say five pounds?"

The sudden fall in her price looked suspicious. She was quick enough to notice it, and continued her sentence hastily. "Five pounds down, that is, and the other five pounds if I prove it all square to your satisfaction."

"How will you do that?"

"You come along with me at once; it won't take you half an hour, and you shall see Fanny for yourself—Mrs. Jacob Pexton, I mean. You can ask her what you like, and she can show you some of your things she's kept—the ivory-backed brush and a writing-case—Mrs. Vernon's

things, then, if you will have it. You shall have every proof she can give you. Come! you can't object to meeting her, when you're not Mrs. Vernon, you know!"

The woman's eyes shone with greed and eagerness: "It won't take you half an hour. There's a cab outside. I kept it in case you wouldn't see me, or we didn't get on friendly. You can drive there and drive back. It's close to."

She was actually trembling with anxiety to close the bargain.

I began to get excited myself. There was a spice of adventure in the proceeding that just suited my mood. The statement, if genuine, might go far to reassure Bertram's father, especially if it came to him accompanied by the news of the unlucky Mrs. Vernon's death. Then I might learn more by actually seeing and questioning the interesting penitent Fanny. Lastly, it gave me a certain thrill of satisfaction to reflect here is one who can testify with certainty that, whoever I am, I am not the late Mrs. Vernon. I really think it was that last reflection which decided me. As to the money, I thought I might be justified in using some of the contents of Mrs. Vernon's purse for such an object.

"Five pounds down," I repeated firmly.

"What I may give you hereafter depends just on what your stepmother's information may be worth. I will make no promise."

I thought she must be honest, she caught at the arrangement so readily.

"I don't ask anything fairer than that. You come with me and you'll hear what'll be worth, ah, may be pounds and pounds, but I'll leave it to you to say, ma'am. Every one as is a well-wisher to Miss Muriel must be interested in clearing her poor ma's character."

I hesitated no longer. "I shall be ready in a few minutes," I said, and hurried to my room. There I quickly donned the rest of my borrowed plumage, the little fur-lined cloak, the big picturesque hat trimmed to match the dress, even the gloves with fur tops matching the rest were there. I hardly stopped to laugh at my transmogrified self, but, taking a five-pound note from my secret hoard, I hastened back to conclude my bargain.

Mrs. Brent caught me at the door.

"Going out, ma'am? Oh, dear, it's a bitter day. What would Dr. Millar say?"

"I'm not going far and I shall drive."



"Would you like any one to go with you, ma'am, as Miss Magrath is not here?"

"No, thanks. I shall be home in less than an hour."

"Very well, ma'am. But I was going to ask about that letter. My little nephew is here, he comes to dinner every other Sunday, and if you could trust him with it—he's as good a child as ever was—he'd take it for you at once."

I had put up my letter to Colonel Fortescue with the rings for Muriel and Mrs. Vernon's papers all together, and gave the parcel to Mrs. Brent with many cautions.

Martha Pexton looked suspiciously at me when I re-entered.

"You've not been playing any low trick, sending for the police or Colonel Fortescue—I beg your pardon, ma'am, but the pore creature is that delicate and nervous, and a shock might be the death of her," she ended, changing her tone when she saw the note in my hand.

She made some demur about delivering over the paper, but I stood firm and locked it up safely before we left the room. Mrs. Brent let us out and watched our departure with disapproving eyes. We passed the small nephew going on my errand with my parcel under his arm.

The drive was, as she had promised, a short one. The cab turned into a street of handsome houses that looked as if it had shut itself up for the winter. The windows of the one where we alighted were shuttered closely, and there was a bill, "To Let, Furnished," in one of them. I looked at Martha in surprise.

"My father is the caretaker," she explained, fitting her latch-key into the door. "The cab had better wait, we may not be here many minutes."

I assented, and followed her into the gloomy, echoing hall. The door banged heavily after us.

"Will you wait in here?" she asked, throwing open the door of a back room on the ground floor. The shutters were closed, but did not come within two feet of the top of the windows, so that there was sufficient light coming in from above. It was an uninviting room, apparently a small library or morning-room, divided by large folding-doors from the front room. The walls were covered with bookshelves at present shrouded in dust-sheets, and the furniture stacked in one corner. Miss Pexton dragged out an armchair for me and left me.

My courage cooled in the minutes that followed—how many I cannot guess—during which I waited for her return. I got tired of looking at the dusty bronzes and the stopped clock on the mantelpiece, the leather-covered writing-table with the round mark in the dust where somebody's hat had been put down. I thought it must have been a hat because of the size and shape, and I idly wondered if it were Mr. Pexton's, and whether he had brushed it before he went out. I supposed the Pextons lived in the basement, the house was so quiet.

Somebody must have arrived or departed while I sat there. I had heard the sound of the front door closing and the rattle of wheels. I fancied, too, I heard movements on the other side of the folding-doors, a footstep pacing to and fro. Then I distinctly heard the fire stirred. Whoever was there must be as solitary as myself, for I could hear no voices, only the restless footfall, and now that stopped.

My patience was strained to its utmost, and at last gave way, and I went to the door determined to find Martha Pexton, but got no further—the door was fast locked. At first incredulous, I gave the handle a smart turn and a shake, but only to be convinced of the trick that had been played me—a trick so utterly purposeless that I felt too puzzled to guess at its object, and tried the handle once more, then knocked sharply, then called twice, thrice. No answer. I went to the window. The shutter-bar was firmly fixed, either by rust or some spring that I could not discover. Then I went to the folding-doors, to apply, however unwillingly, for assistance to the tenant of the next room.

Their key, at least, was on the right side. I turned it and flung the door open. A spacious dining-room was before me, in which the afternoon sun shone over the shutter-tops. A fire was burning in the grate, there was a delicate scent of tobacco in the air, and immediately opposite me, sitting on the edge of the table, was a gentleman, cigar in mouth, newspaper in hand. A bulky figure in smart Sunday raiment, his tall hat and yellow tan gloves on the table beside him, and over the back of the chair near him a far-trimmed overcoat.

He dropped the paper and looked at me for a moment, slipped off his seat, laid his cigar down on the mantelpiece, and advanced with outstretched hand.

"I cannot be mistaken. I heard you

were expected here. Welcome home, Mrs. Vernon!"

I stopped short, shocked, breathless, my ideas numb, the words frozen on my lips. I kept my hands tight-clasped inside my muff, and took no notice of his greeting, trying with all my might to collect my shaken senses, while the stranger stood before me politely waiting my pleasure.

He was the sort of man that other men would cordially dislike, and some women admire. Tall and florid, with glossy black hair, a hook nose, and long, dark, liquid eyes. His moustache did not serve to conceal entirely the thickness of his over-red lips, which wreathed themselves into a smile as I looked him over and over.

I did not find myself trembling or disposed to hysterics. That was not my way; the training of those long years of self-repression was against it, the old trick of outward composure remained to me, and my voice was steady when I asked:

"Where is the woman who brought me here—Martha Pexton?"

"Gone, more than ten minutes ago," he replied, still smiling. "At least, I fancied I heard her drive away."

"And where is her stepmother, Mrs. Pexton?"

"Gone too, but gone where we cannot follow her," he said with a touch of mock solemnity in his deep, musical voice, lifting one sleek white hand and his eyes ceiling-wards. "Mrs. Pexton—or Fanny Burridge—died two months ago. There is nobody in this house at present but myself and you."

"And who are you?" I demanded, getting thoroughly aroused and angry.

"I beg your pardon; I forgot that I ought to have introduced myself at once. I am your husband's friend, Sir Claude Levison."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"LEVISON!" I recalled Colonel Forrescue's voice as he pronounced the name. "And he holds Vernon in his power, and Vernon holds Muriel." I was face to face with Muriel's enemy. Oh, tenfold need had I of whatever wit and courage I possessed that she should come to no harm through me! Might I—could I even aid her? I did not know how, but I dismissed for the moment the idea of declaring my own name and insisting on being allowed to leave the house forthwith. I was not afraid on my own account, I discovered

with some surprise. So I merely bowed a cold acknowledgement of the introduction and demanded, "Why have I been entrapped into coming here?"

"Not entrapped—don't call it entrapped," he pleaded; "let us say induced. You have been induced to return to your own house just for a few hours by an innocent little stratagem. I am responsible for that, I confess. Give me leave to explain, and I don't despair of being forgiven."

He looked at me persuasively, and drew up a chair to the fireside, and then another for himself, glanced at his cigar, but looked away again, and then turned his heavy-lidded dark eyes on me and studied me attentively but not offensively for a few seconds. When he spoke at last it was with a subtle change of tone, as if he were addressing another person.

"I caused you to come here, Mrs. Vernon—under false pretences if you like—for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation between you and your husband. I am acting for the good of both. It is the only course to pursue since you have seen fit to come to England. I would have given you some time longer in the hope that you would make the first advances, but when I find you in constant communication with Forrescue, who is avowedly unfriendly to me, and receiving surreptitious visits from your daughter and her lover, I am obliged to interfere for my own protection. I don't apologise for telling you that as your name has been before the public once, the public—which has a short memory for facts and never discriminates—will always be ready to believe the worst of you. You ought to be doubly careful, if not for your own, for Muriel's sake."

That appeal again, and from his lips, stung me into speech, despite my best resolutions.

"Muriel! What is Muriel to you?"

"Muriel is my future wife," he said, in a tone of quiet security.

I pressed my lips close and dropped my eyes that no word or look of the horror that filled me should escape. He misunderstood my silence.

"For her sake and likewise for my own," he continued, drawing his chair closer and keeping his eyes firmly fixed on mine as if he hoped to subdue my will by some mesmeric influence. "You seem a cleverer woman and more reasonable than I was led to expect, Mrs. Vernon. Let us consider the situation calmly and fairly. I assume, of course, that you are a devoted

mother," with a faint sneer; "well, here is your daughter, on the threshold of life, hampered at the outset by two such parents as Vernon and yourself. Vernon has been going steadily downhill ever since you left him, and your life abroad has not been exactly calculated to do credit to a daughter. Now, I say, make a fresh start. Vernon is not the man I should recommend to a young girl to marry, but as you are already his wife, why not make a few sacrifices for the sake of your child? You need not see more of one another than you choose; you hold the purse-strings and can make what conditions you please. You are well off, and the best use you can make of your money is to set him on his legs once more. It won't be for long; no constitution could stand the pace he has been living at; but you can keep up a decent appearance before the world, at least until Muriel is married to me and has made her footing good in society."

"Muriel will never marry you—never!" He waved a deprecating hand at the interruption, but I could see my feeble dart had pierced his self-complacency.

"Does she say so?" he asked almost wistfully, then smiling once more—he could not help his smiles being repulsive, I suppose, but they made me shudder. "Ah, you are thinking of her engagement! Pooh!" with an airy wave of his fingers.

"Gordon goes off in a few days for three years—so he thinks, but I am much mistaken if he sees England again in double that length of time. You need not look at me with abhorrence, it is no doing of mine. I've no influence with the authorities, Admiral Gordon will manage it. Bertie Gordon is young—very young. He will be constant, I dare say—in fact, I am sure he will—while he is at sea. I shall do nothing to roughen the course of true love; I am not the villain of a novel, and would not drag a reluctant bride to the altar on any consideration. I let my two good allies, time and distance, work for me, and wait patiently till the young folk of their own accord agree to part. There will come a month or two of drooping, and life-weariness, and decent mourning over a dead and buried love, and then—my opportunity."

I listened, disgusted but fascinated. Repulsive as he was, there was power in the man. He was promising nothing that he did not feel it within his compass to perform.

"What would you have?" he went on impetuously. "You would keep her pining and pining, fretting for a lover who will not come back to her—or if he does, is a very different lover from the one she parted with. You would rather have her left to nobody's care, an overgrown school-girl moping over her disappointment than my wife, with everything love and money can give her. She isn't a beauty now, I know," he went on, warming with his subject; "but see her in a year or two, prosperous, well-dressed. Lady Levison in her Court dress and diamonds; Lady Levison on the box-seat of my four-in-hand; Lady Levison entertaining Royalty in the handsomest house in London. I can get it all for her and I will. She shall be first, amongst the very best people, too. And it shan't be all show and gaiety. I'd despise a woman who cared for nothing better. Whatever line she chooses to take—art, philanthropy, politics—the last for choice—I can help her in it better than any other man I know. I've my eye on a place in the country, or we'll take Llantwyth off your hands if you like, and she shall have her schools, and almshouses, and cottagers to play the Lady Bountiful amongst, in the real country lady style. I shall go into Parliament soon; Baron Levison, perhaps, one of these days, or Baron Llantwyth—that's better. What do you think of that?"

It was Muriel he wanted—Muriel and not her money. He was the more dangerous. My silence irritated him.

"Have you nothing to say? Won't you favour me with your own views on the question? Do you wish her to share Tom Vernon's bachelor ménage, or have you some idea of taking her away yourself? Forgive me for hinting that if Admiral Gordon already objects to Muriel as a daughter-in-law on account of her relationship to you, his objections would hardly be removed by her residence abroad amongst the extremely questionable set of friends you have gathered round you."

"Excuse me, you know nothing whatever about my life up to the time of that railway accident."

"I know the Maddisons, husband and wife, fleeced you remorselessly, and the handsome young German—what's his name? Scherer—involved you in an awkward correspondence, and then would have blackmailed you if Mademoiselle Simon had not brought the police down on him; and then

there was the shady English clergyman, as he described himself—I think I need not go on, though I could give you the chronicles of many a year past. Why, it was my doing that those two last letters were forwarded to you. I meant them to bring you home."

"And Miss Pexton was your agent, and that confession of her stepmother's perhaps your composition?"

"No, no! Genuine that, every word of it. The woman died some weeks after she wrote it, and her admirable daughter at once tried whether she could make a deal with Vernon. He sent her on to me, and I got Vernon to put her in here as caretaker. I had a notion that it might come in useful to be able to lay my hand on her when wanted. I saw her on Saturday evening and gave her her orders. She insisted on being allowed to make her own bargain first with you. Did you give her much for that paper? She was sharp enough to keep Mrs. Pexton's death quiet for the purposes of trade, I suppose. How did she fetch you here?"

I did not notice the question but rose from my chair.

"I have heard you out, Sir Claude; I think I had a right to do so, as I am Muriel Vernon's most faithful and devoted friend, but not the poor lady you mistake me for. Mrs. Vernon is dead. I can prove it. I will tell you some other time by what accident we came to change places and the real Mrs. Vernon to be buried under my name of Elizabeth Margison. Don't you believe me? Don't you wish to believe me?"

He looked deeply concerned, even alarmed.

"Ah, that is what you used to tell them at the hospital, was it not? But you have known better since you came out? Can you not remember your husband?"

"I deny that he is my husband."

"Well, Muriel, then—your daughter. You recognised her."

"I deny that she is my daughter."

He gave a low whistle of dismay, and stood before the fire looking frowningly at me and fingering his moustache with a thoroughly perplexed air. Then he slowly and thoughtfully put himself into his big fur-trimmed coat.

"You are still ill," he said quite gently; "you will be better at home. I will take you there if you will allow me."

I didn't feel ill, I was too excited. But I gladly accepted his offer with an inward laugh to myself at Kitty's probable feelings could she see me returning under the escort of "the man in the coat."

A key clicked in the door outside. Sir Claude started.

"Wait a moment," he begged, and hurried out to meet the new-comer, closing the door after him.

I heard two men's voices outside in debate, but the words were inaudible. At last one, a strange one, raised angrily, came to me distinctly.

"Thank you, I'll make your excuses to my wife. I don't think we want the assistance of any third person to come to an understanding. Ta-ta!"

"Stay where you are!" Sir Claude's deep voice commanded. The door opened and he looked in upon me. "Your husband—I mean Mr. Vernon—is here. Do you wish to see him or not? If you don't feel equal to it, he can wait till another time."

I had no wish to avoid the meeting. Mr. Vernon was a witness on my side. "I will see him at once, if you please."

"Very good."

But instead of admitting Mr. Vernon he withdrew himself. I heard a few undistinguishable words exchanged outside, then the heavy bang of the street door, and I realised with some dismay that I was left, unsupported, to an interview with Mr. Tom Vernon.

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